



# NORTHGATE URBAN CENTER & OVERLAY DISTRICT

## Design Guidelines

*Effective November 13, 2003*



City of Seattle  
Department of Planning  
and Development



Seattle Design Review Program



# **Design Review:**    *Northgate Urban Center & Overlay District Design Guidelines*

## **Contents**

<b>I. Design Review in Seattle's Neighborhoods</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>II. Northgate Area Context and Priority Design Issues</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>III. Design Guidelines</b>	
<b>A. Site Planning</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>B. Height, Bulk and Scale</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>C. Open Spaces and Connections</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>D. Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>E. Landscaping</b>	<b>22</b>

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Department of Planning and Development (DPD)  
Department of Neighborhoods  
Seattle Department of Transportation  
Seattle Planning Commission



# I. Design Review in Seattle's Neighborhoods

## What is Design Review?

Design Review is a component of the Master Use Permit (MUP) application and is required for most new commercial, mixed-use and multifamily developments. It provides a forum through which developers and citizens can work together to ensure that new developments contribute positively to Seattle's neighborhoods.

Design Review has three principal objectives:

1. Encourage better design and site planning to enhance the character of the city and ensure that new development fits sensitively into neighborhoods;
2. Provide flexibility in the application of development standards; and
3. Improve communication and participation among developers, neighbors and the City early in the design and siting of new development.

Design Review, as with other components of a MUP application, is administered by the Department of Planning and Development (DPD). Design Review applications require public notice and an opportunity for comment. Projects are brought before a Design Review Board for its recommendations or, alternatively, to DPD staff in what is referred to as Administrative Design Review. The final decision on Design Review recommendations is made by the DPD Director, and is appealable to the Hearing Examiner.

## What are Neighborhood-Specific Design Guidelines?

In reviewing development proposals in neighborhoods with City Council-adopted neighborhood-specific design guidelines, the Design Review Board consults two sets of guidelines. The *Citywide Design Guidelines* are of a general nature and apply throughout the city, whereas the *Neighborhood-Specific Design Guidelines* address more specific design concerns that have historical, cultural or architectural significance to a particular neighborhood.

The Northgate Urban Center and Overlay District Design Guidelines augment the existing Citywide Design Guidelines.

The Northgate Urban Center and Overlay District Design Guidelines carry forward the urban design objectives of the 1993 Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan. Thus, the Northgate Urban Center and Overlay District Design Guidelines, in conjunction with the Citywide Design Guidelines, can increase overall awareness of good design and involvement in the development review process.

## More About Design Review

More information about Design Review can be found in the Citywide Design Guidelines, Client Assistance Memo #238, and in the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC 23.41). Information includes:

- Projects Subject to Design Review
- How Design Guidelines are Applied
- Who Serves on the Design Review Board
- Development Standards Departures

## II. Northgate Area Context and Priority Design Issues

Building on urban design-related goals and recommendations included in the 1993 Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan, the Northgate Urban Center and Overlay District Design Guidelines are intended to provide methods and identify opportunities for how new developments can make a positive contribution to the neighborhood. The guidelines are intended to ensure that good urban design will be achieved whenever new development is proposed.

Currently, the Northgate area is characterized by a “suburban” pattern of commercial development and its role as a regional shopping and employment center. The Northgate area would prefer new growth to include wider sidewalks, extensive landscaping, interesting and permeable facades, decreased and screened surface parking lots, screened parking garages, below grade parking, parking behind buildings, and pedestrian amenities consistent with an urban pattern and character of development. Unlike more established neighborhoods, the Northgate area does not have much in the way of noteworthy building character and patterns of urban form to which new developments should respond. What it does have, however, is an overall vision of a vibrant and attractive urban center, with a mix of uses and a pedestrian orientation in terms of character, function and scale. This vision is the result of an extensive planning process involving Northgate area citizens. The goals and objectives supporting this vision provide context and clarity for the design guidelines. Three key goals broadly define the community vision and provide the framework for the Northgate Urban Center and Overlay District Design Guidelines:

- 1. Provide comfort, visual interest and activity for pedestrians;**
- 2. Design identity should be defined block-by-block; and**
- 3. Open Spaces and Connections - creating pedestrian spaces and linkages throughout the area.**

As concepts, these goals apply to all components of a well-designed urban environment, including streets, sidewalks, open spaces and buildings. The Northgate Urban Center and Overlay District Design Guidelines further articulate these broad goals by developing specific objectives that new developments should meet. These objectives form the basis for specific design guidelines to be used in combination with the Citywide Design Guidelines.

These design guidelines will apply to new development proposals, along with Northgate Area regulations that include development standards outlined in the Northgate Overlay District. These regulations include a Major Pedestrian Street Designation for portions of 5th Avenue NE and NE Northgate Way that prescribe streetscape standards such as sidewalk width, street trees and minimum commercial storefront transparency. Also included are open space incentives that encourage new development to provide usable public open space. The Northgate Urban Center and Overlay District Design Guidelines are intended to augment these existing regulations with more descriptive recommendations aimed at improving the quality of the urban environment. As part of a larger, long-range planning strategy, the design guidelines promote: development that enhances the neighborhood’s visual character, function and identity; pedestrian linkages between uses, properties and streets; and high quality design of individual sites. The guidelines are not, however, intended to restrict innovation, imagination or variety in design that further enhances the pedestrian environment or the goals and objectives of the Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan. If an alternative design can be demonstrated to achieve the desired character while still meeting the basic intent of the design criteria, the design review board may consider the proposal.



## Sub-Area Existing Conditions

*The Northgate area is characterized by sub-areas, as defined by both existing physical conditions and redevelopment potential. New developments should respond to specific conditions particular to each of these areas.*

### Super Blocks

The properties surrounding 1st and 5th Avenues NE and NE Northgate Way exhibit a “super block” character in scale and automobile orientation. They are large, uninterrupted properties (some with lengths exceeding 800 feet, compared to 240-foot long blocks downtown) that are unfriendly or intimidating to the pedestrian, with expanses of parking separating structures from the sidewalk.



### Mixed-Use Redevelopment

There are many properties within the area’s retail core zoned Neighborhood Commercial where opportunities for interconnected, walkable mixed-use redevelopment exist.



### Low Density Residential

Lower density, multifamily zones provide a transition to the single family areas prevalent on the edges of the Northgate area.



### Zone Edges

While zoning designations are intended to provide transitions from higher intensity to lower intensity developments, there are places within the Northgate area where abrupt edges between high density and very low-scale buildings exist. These areas require particular attention in mitigating height, bulk and scale impacts on single family houses and smaller multifamily structures.



### High Density Residential

There are several high density, multifamily developments surrounding the retail core. With improved sidewalks and other desirable street elements as planned in the 5th Avenue Streetscape Design Project, and neighborhood goods and services within walking distance, pedestrian activity should increase considerably. Zoning allows for higher density development to occur in proximity to the retail core.







# Northgate Urban Center and Overlay District Design Guidelines



# Northgate Urban Center and Overlay District Design Guidelines

Projects requiring design review within the area depicted in Figure 1 must address the community design guidelines in this handbook as well as the Citywide Design Guidelines.

**Note:** The guidelines are numbered to correspond to the Citywide Design Guidelines (A-1, A-2, etc.). A gap in the numerical sequence means there are no neighborhood design guidelines for that particular Citywide Guideline.

## A. Community Goal: Provide Comfort, Visual Interest and Activity for Pedestrians.

**I. Development Objective:** Livelier street edges make for safer streets. Ensure that buildings have visual interest and quality at street level, at a human scale, with accessible, comfortable spaces that encourage pedestrian activity.



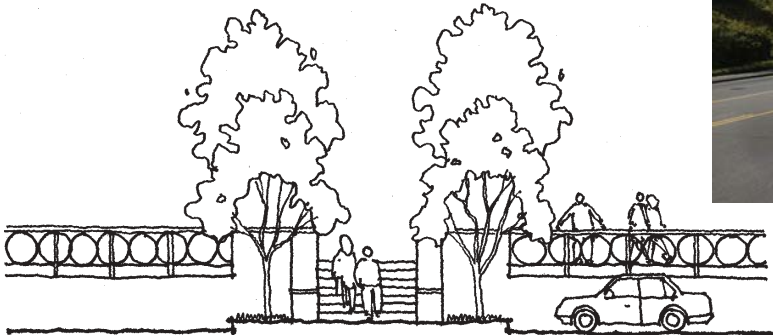
comfort, visual interest and activity for the pedestrian

### A. Site Planning

#### A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics

##### Grade Changes

Try to match the grade of abutting public rights-of-way where properties meet. If there is a significant grade difference, create an attractive transition, using creative grading and landscaping. Be sure to incorporate pedestrian access.



*Where a grade change is unavoidable, consider, where appropriate, incorporate pedestrian access into the design of the project.*



*grade change on 5th Ave NE*

#### A-2 Streetscape Compatibility

##### Commercial and Mixed-Use Buildings

- The ground floors of buildings should appear inviting to the public by containing commercial uses and public open spaces with direct entry from the sidewalk. Vary in size, width and depth to accommodate a variety of appropriate uses and activities for the site and vicinity. This includes providing multiple entries at the street.
- For corridors between commercial spaces, open-air passageways are generally more visible and more inviting than interior hallways. This can be an attractive, successful location for store entries, store windows and restaurant/cafe seating.
- Further articulate the street level facade to provide a comfortable pedestrian experience with placement of street trees, exterior lighting on buildings, planters and overhead weather protection.





## Promote Pedestrian Interaction



comfort, visual  
interest and  
activity for the  
pedestrian



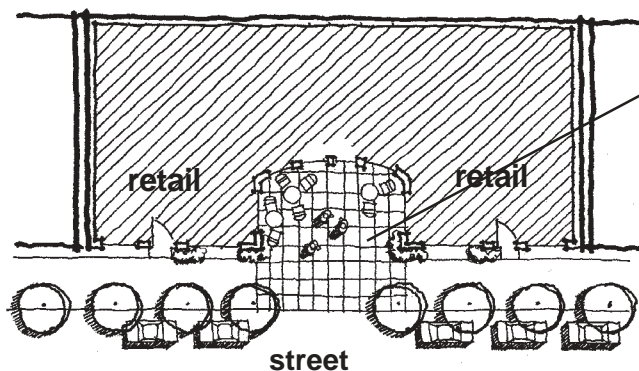
This area is unique in that the two main commercial corridors, 5th Avenue NE and NE Northgate Way, are designated as Major Pedestrian Streets and intersect at the north-east corner of the mall.\* The Major Pedestrian Street designation is intended to increase pedestrian circulation with an improved street level environment by creating a public realm that is safe, interesting and comfortable. New developments in these designated areas must

comply with standards for types, dimensions and orientation of street level uses, and provide streetscape amenities such as overhead weather protection, seating, street trees and street lights. However, pedestrian-friendly streets should not be confined to areas within this designation, and properties from the office park to NE 100th Street, NE 103rd Street, NE 100th Street, 1st Avenue NE, 5th Avenue NE in the core area; and 5th Avenue NE, Roosevelt Way NE, and 15th Avenue NE where Neighborhood Commercial and multifamily zones exist along the Special Landscaped Arterials should all be included in this discussion. The following guidelines are of highest priority in helping to meet this objective.

### A-4 Human Activity

Sidewalks are the principal place of pedestrian movement and casual social interaction. Designs and uses should complement this function.

Consider setting portions of the building back to create spaces at street level for pedestrian-oriented activities. Take the “indoors” outdoors by spilling interior space (e.g. dining areas, merchandise displays) onto plazas and walkways and bring the “outdoors” into the building by opening interior spaces to sunlight and views of sidewalk activity.

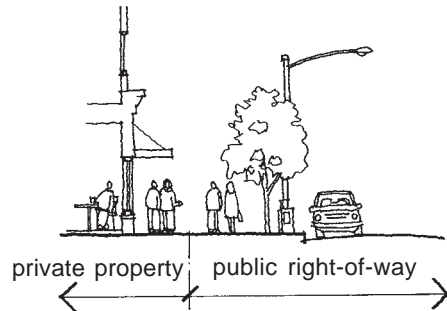


*Design for uses that are accessible to the general public, generate walk-in business and contribute to a high level of pedestrian activity at street level. Consider extending street-level spaces out to the sidewalk with multiple entrances and open spaces featuring decorative paving, street furniture and artwork. Retail uses should front such spaces.*

\* This guideline supplements SMC 23.71.008, “Development along Major Pedestrian Streets”. Major Pedestrian Street designations include the complete intersections of 3rd Avenue NE and NE Northgate Way, 11th Avenue NE and NE Northgate Way, NE 113th Street and 5th Avenue NE and NE 105th Street and 5th Avenue NE.

## A-4 Human Activity (cont'd)

Sidewalk widths throughout the Northgate area are less than ideal, and wider sidewalks will allow for more pedestrian circulation and activity. Within active retail areas, proposed developments are encouraged to set back from the street-fronting property line to provide additional space abutting the sidewalk.



The Major Pedestrian Street designation calls for 12-foot sidewalks, however, 16-foot sidewalks are preferred in commercial areas, where appropriate. To recover the loss of development potential at the ground floor from setting the building back, the Design Review Board may entertain a request for a departure to exceed the 64% upper level lot coverage requirement for mixed-use projects in Neighborhood Commercial zones.



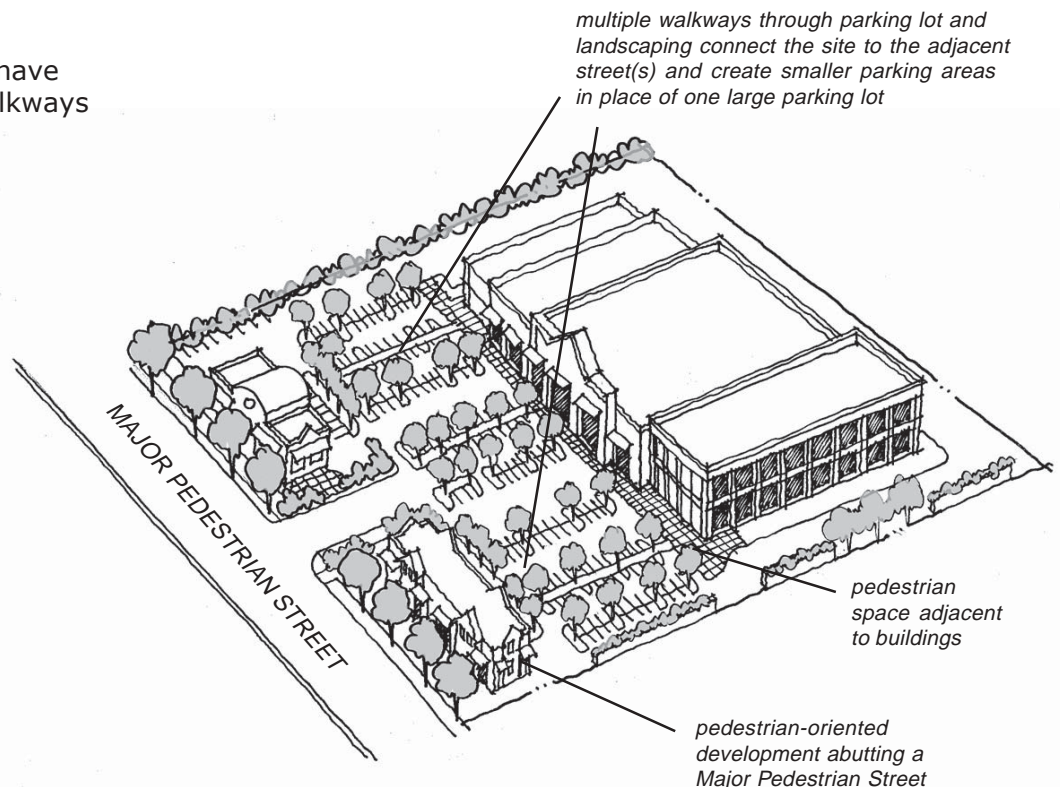
comfort, visual interest and activity for the pedestrian

## Superblock Development

One of the most important design considerations in meeting the goal of a pedestrian-friendly urban environment is to site and design street-level commercial uses that present a welcoming public face to buildings and to encourage human activity on the street. Superblock developments on Major Pedestrian Streets are expected to be built up to the edge of the sidewalk and meet the other pedestrian street designation standards. Where superblock developments are not along designated Major Pedestrian Streets, they should achieve a pedestrian-friendly environment within the internal layout of a superblock site, where commercial buildings may be separated from the public right-of-way by parking. Every attempt should be made to link large sites to the greater community by creating lively, interesting pedestrian connections within the site, and also between the site and its surroundings. Key internal at-grade passageways accommodating pedestrian and vehicular circulation on large sites should not be ignored as locations for pleasant pedestrian places (see sketches below for recommended commercial superblock design features).

## Considerations

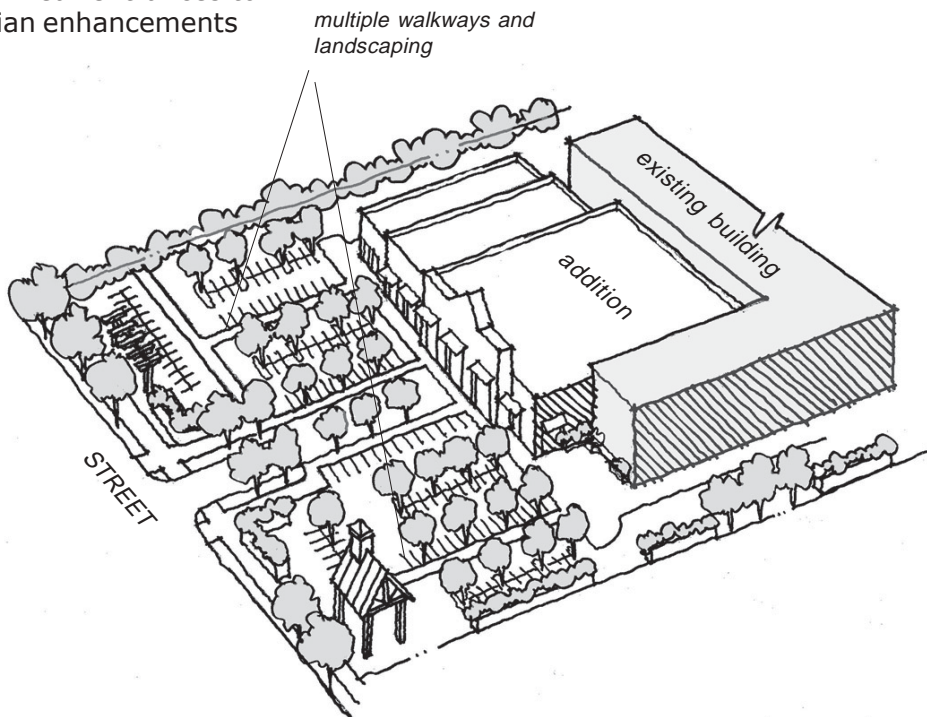
- Developments should have internal drives and walkways adjacent to buildings designed with the basic elements of good pedestrian-oriented shopping street: buildings oriented close to walkways, landscaping, pedestrian-scale lighting, walkways of sufficient width to encourage social interactions without impeding pedestrian movement, and other similar enhancements.



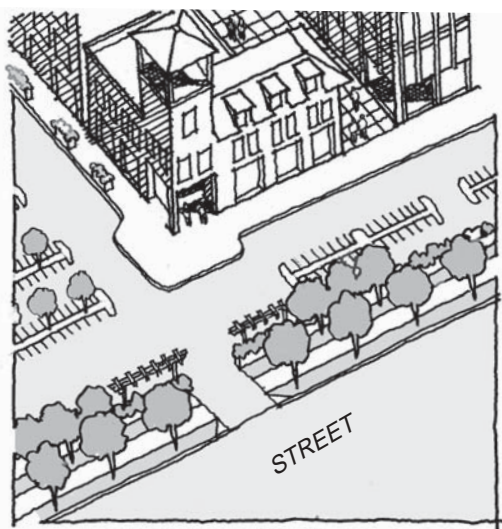
## A-4 Human Activity (cont'd): Superblock Development Considerations

### Considerations (cont'd)

- Usable pedestrian space such as a plaza or extra-wide sidewalk near entrances to buildings with pedestrian enhancements are encouraged either at the street or within the site adjacent to a private drive.
- Parking Lots - Surface parking areas located between primary buildings and the public right-of-way should include walkways, landscaping and lighting to delineate safe and comfortable pedestrian circulation within the site.



An example of a development scenario involving an addition to an existing structure on a superblock site.



Street trees, landscaping and architectural elements such as trellises can present a human-scaled street edge and comfortable pedestrian environment in the public realm. The commercial buildings, when set back from the street, create an internal "streetscape", with open storefronts, special paving and other amenities to create usable and welcoming spaces for people entering the stores from parking areas or surrounding streets.



comfort, visual interest and activity for the pedestrian



#### A-4 Human Activity: Street Level Transparency

The intention of transparency in the street level facades of commercial and civic buildings is to provide for interaction between people in the interior of a building and people near the exterior of a building—particularly on the sidewalk—through a direct visual connection. The following are examples of less desirable design treatments that should be discouraged:

- windowless walls;
- mirrored or non-transparent glass;
- glass block;
- display cases;
- narrow windows not meeting the intent above;
- windows located above waist level to persons outside the building on the sidewalk;
- windows into areas that are too small, shallow, or narrow to support normal human activity (e.g. the back of a tall display case, a narrow hallway); and
- any interior wall, equipment, or functional layout that hampers the intent of transparency stated above.



*example of intended function of street level building transparency*



comfort,  
visual  
interest  
and activity  
for the  
pedestrian

#### A-8 Parking and Vehicle Access

Site and design driveways to minimize conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians. This is especially important along Northgate Way, 1st Avenue NE, 5th Avenue NE, Roosevelt Way NE, 15th Avenue NE, NE 100th Street, NE 103rd Street, and NE 125th Street. Minimize the number of curb cuts and width of driveways and curb cuts along these streets.

Where feasible, parking areas should be located to the rear of buildings that face NE Northgate Way, 1st Avenue NE, 5th Avenue NE, Roosevelt Way NE, 15th Avenue NE, NE 100th Street and NE 103rd Street.

Where surface parking must be located to the side of structures, the following is recommended:

- Place surface parking away from the corners of blocks fronting on NE Northgate Way, 5th Avenue NE, 8th Avenue NE, Roosevelt Way NE, 15th Avenue NE, NE 100th Street, NE 103rd Street and NE 125th Street.
- Limit the frontage of surface parking areas that face NE Northgate Way and 5th Avenue NE (outside the Major Pedestrian Street designations).

#### **Encourage the creation of multi-purpose parking areas.**

These areas can provide parking as well as public open space, such as places for special neighborhood functions (markets, gatherings), cultural events (outdoor theater, music), and recreational activities. Examples of elements for public open spaces include: special surface treatments, art, fountains and seating, locations for removable bollards or other elements to restrict automobile access to public spaces when not used for parking, use lighting to create a safe environment while minimizing glare onto adjacent properties and sidewalks.

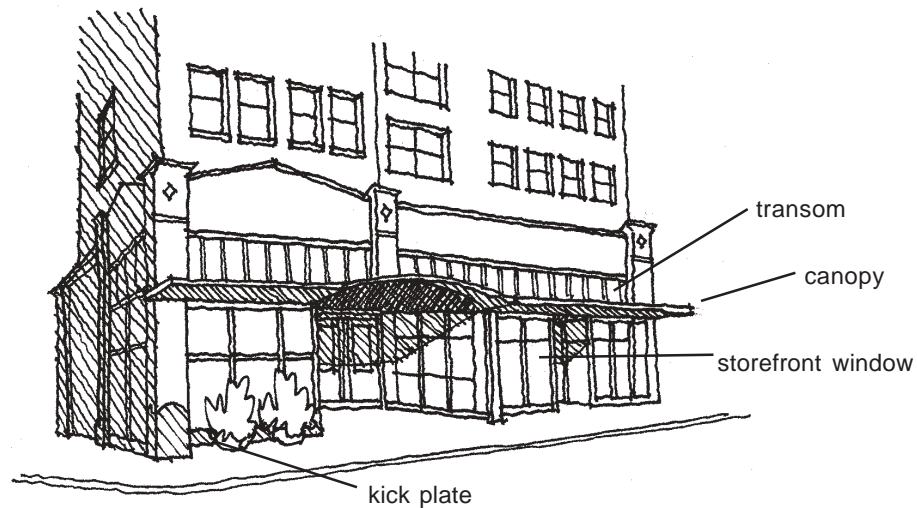
### C-3 Human Scale (Architectural Materials and Elements)

#### Commercial and Mixed-Use Buildings

The ground level of the building must offer pedestrian interest along sidewalks. This includes windows, entrances, and architectural details. Signs, overhead weather protection and ornamentation are encouraged.



comfort, visual interest and activity for the pedestrian



#### All New Developments

Exterior buildings materials should have a human scale; this helps people relate to the size of the building. Good examples include stone and brick. Non-modular exterior materials, such as stucco, and those in large modules, such as concrete panels, will need finer details to reduce the perceived bulk and create human scale.



### C-3 Human Scale (Architectural Materials and Elements) cont'd

Examples of how materials are used to establish human scale.



*Example of desirable scale and proportion in the facade composition of a large building achieved by its fenestration patterns and detailing, and variegated exterior finish materials and detailing.*



*Vertically proportioned elements, including windows and porches, articulate the building into intervals.*



*Example of a residential building articulated into intervals by its multiple roof line and building elements.*

*Human scale elements include:*



*bays;*



*roof forms; and*



*entrances.*



comfort, visual  
interest and  
activity for the  
pedestrian





design identity  
defined block by  
block

## **B. Community Goal: Design Identity should be defined Block by Block**

- I. Development Objective:** Design the character, form and function of the building in an appropriate manner, responding to the immediate surrounding context - both existing and as envisioned through neighborhood planning documents and concepts supported by the community.

### **Commercial/Residential**

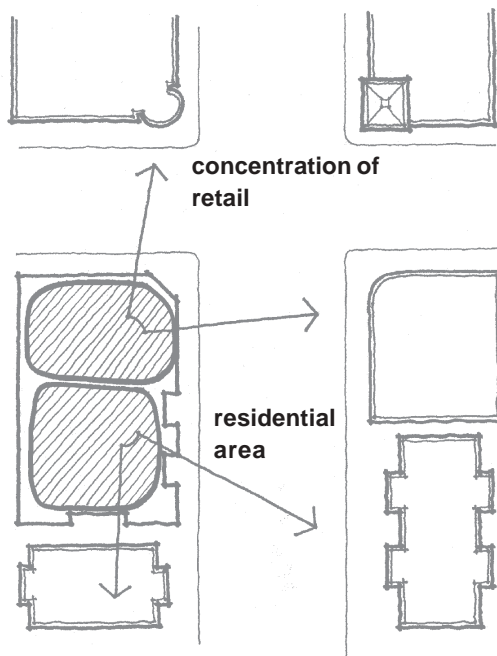
#### **A-2 Streetscape Compatibility**

The architecture of individual buildings should relate to their surroundings. This does not necessarily mean a historical approach, but rather one that is sensitive to the surrounding urban, built and natural environments. In areas zoned for mixed-use development outside the retail core area, orient and design the commercial facade at street level to be compatible with the streetscape of the surrounding residential neighborhood. Compatibility can be accomplished through a combination of the following:

- the overall proportion of the facade;
- building setbacks;
- placement of windows and bays;
- location of entries; and
- exterior materials.



*Commercial buildings can blend into a residential corridor providing the overall design is sensitive to the surrounding conditions*



*break the building down into smaller volumes to relate in similarity to the scale, height and configuration of nearby residential structures.*

## A-10 Corner Lots

New buildings should reinforce street corners and enhance the street level environment at these key pedestrian areas. Street corners are common areas for informal interaction, and the building's relationship to the street and related elements should promote comfort and interest within the public realm. Provide a building entry and additional building mass at the corner; and provide space for movement and activity.

**B**

design identity  
defined block by  
block

The following streetscape elements are encouraged to help meet this objective:

- special paving or surface treatments;
- art;
- water features;
- landscaping;
- seating; and
- kiosks.

*Avoid placing signal control boxes on corners and in the middle of the sidewalk.*



*building form and architectural expression can reinforce the street corner.*



design identity  
defined block by  
block

### Corner Lots as Gateways

New developments on corner lots can aid significantly in marking entry and defining an intersection by “announcing the block” through building forms and features that are visually stimulating and inviting. A gateway can have many forms: a literal gateway expressed through a building form or by the placement of features such as those outlined above. The following locations should meet these objectives:

- The area surrounding NE Northgate Way and 1st Avenue
- The area surrounding the intersection of the Major Pedestrian Streets, NE Northgate Way and 5th Avenue
- The area surrounding the intersection of NE 103rd Street and 1st Avenue NE
- The area surrounding the intersection of NE 103rd Street and 5th Avenue NE
- The area surrounding the intersection of NE 100th Street and 1st Avenue NE
- The area surrounding the intersection of NE 100th Street and 5th Avenue NE
- The area surrounding the intersection of NE 92nd Street and 1st Avenue NE
- The area surrounding NE Northgate Way and Roosevelt Way NE
- The area surrounding NE Northgate Way and 15th Avenue NE
- The area surrounding NE 85th Street and Roosevelt Way NE
- The area surrounding NE 97th Street and Roosevelt Way NE
- The area surrounding NE 85th Street and 5th Avenue NE
- The area surrounding NE 95th Street and 5th Avenue NE
- The area surrounding NE 80th Street and Lake City Way NE
- The area surrounding 15th Avenue NE/Pinehurst Way NE/NE 117th Street
- The area surrounding 15th Avenue NE and NE 125th Street
- The area surrounding Roosevelt Way NE and NE 130th Street

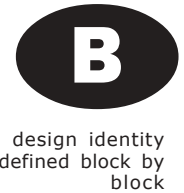


## **B. HEIGHT, BULK AND SCALE**

### **B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility**

#### **Zone Edges**

There are several important zone edges within the Northgate Overlay District that warrant special consideration in creating sensitive transitions in height, bulk and scale. Consistent with the 1993 Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan, the following are methods to establish compatible relationships between different scales of development. These methods are intended to augment building setbacks similar to those specified in the Land Use Code for zone edges where a proposed development project within a more intensive zone abuts a less intensive zone; and techniques specified in Citywide Design Guidelines A-5 and B-1.



#### **Lowrise 4, Midrise, or Highrise development abutting a Single Family, Lowrise Duplex/Triplex, Lowrise 1 or 2 zone:**

- Multifamily developments should maintain the established front setback pattern of the subject block.
- Pay particular attention to structure depth on the abutting lot lines. Orient the massing of the structure away from less intensive zones to the greatest extent possible.

#### **NC2-40', NC3-40' and higher abutting a Single Family, Lowrise Duplex/Triplex, Lowrise 1 and 2:**

- Step back the ground level commercial space to match the established front setback pattern on the subject block.
- Pay particular attention to the depth of the commercial level and upper residential levels along the abutting lot line. Orient the massing away from the lot line of an abutting less intensive zone to the greatest extent possible.
- Soften the commercial facade on the abutting lot line with elements such as dense landscaping.
- Repeat domestic architectural elements of surrounding buildings on portions of the commercial facade adjacent to such buildings. Examples include roof lines and window styles and proportions.

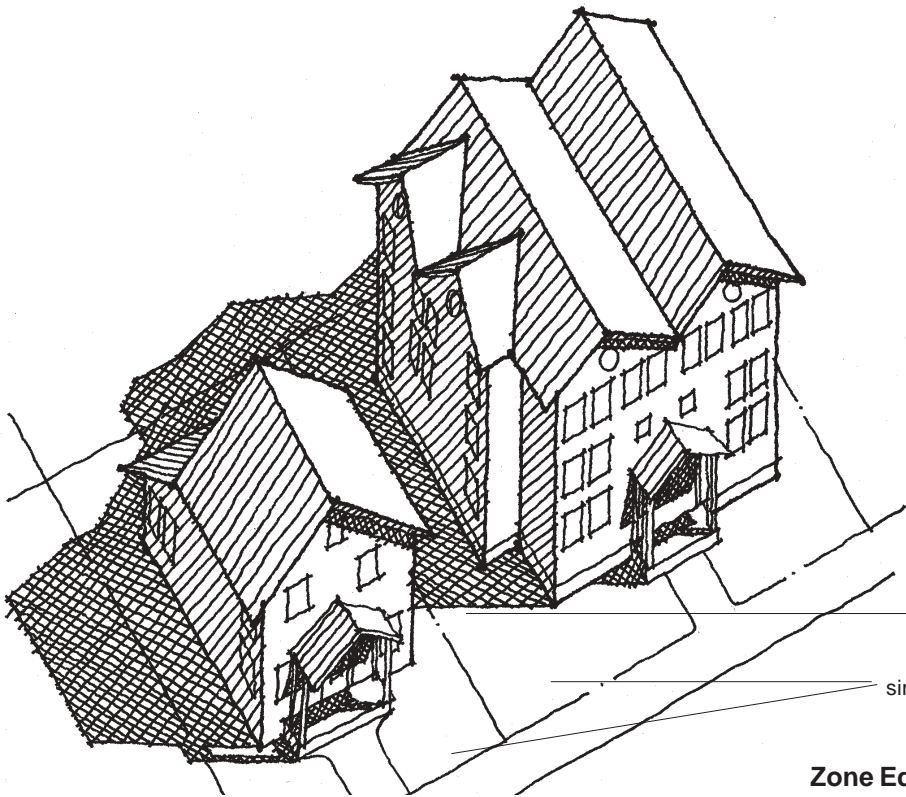


example of a building stepping back away from smaller adjacent structures in the Northgate

Along a zone edge without an alley, consider additional setbacks, softening elements, and architectural compatibility to help reduce the potential 'looming effect' of a much larger structure in proximity to smaller existing buildings.

**B**

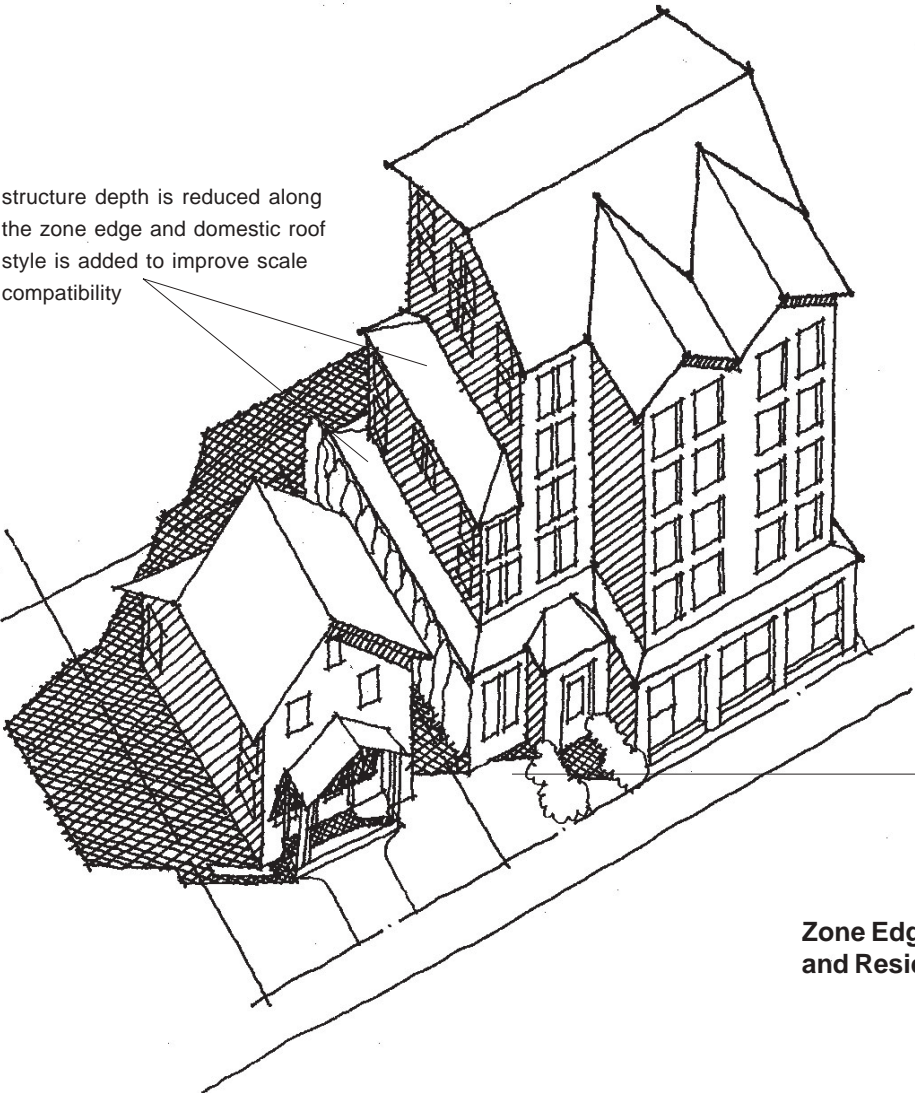
design identity  
defined block by  
block



generous separation  
between structures

similar front setback

**Zone Edge Between Higher and  
ntensive Residential Zones**



structure depth is reduced along  
the zone edge and domestic roof  
style is added to improve scale  
compatibility

commercial level  
stepping back to match  
the front setback line of  
abutting property

**Zone Edge Between Mixed Use  
and Residential Zones**

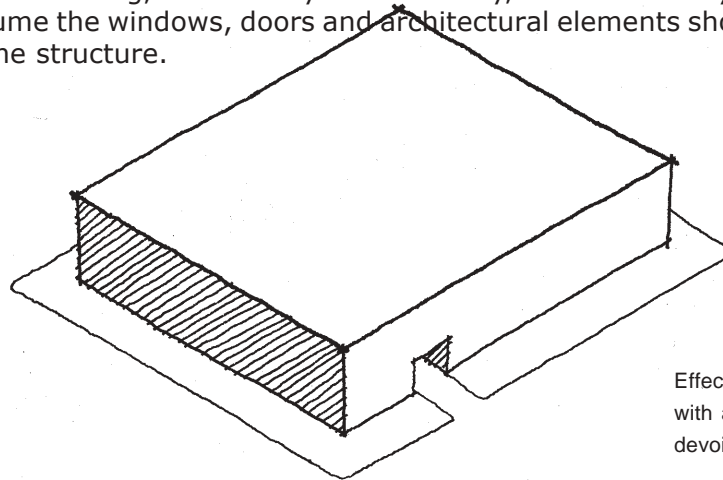
## B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility (cont'd)

### Super Block Development

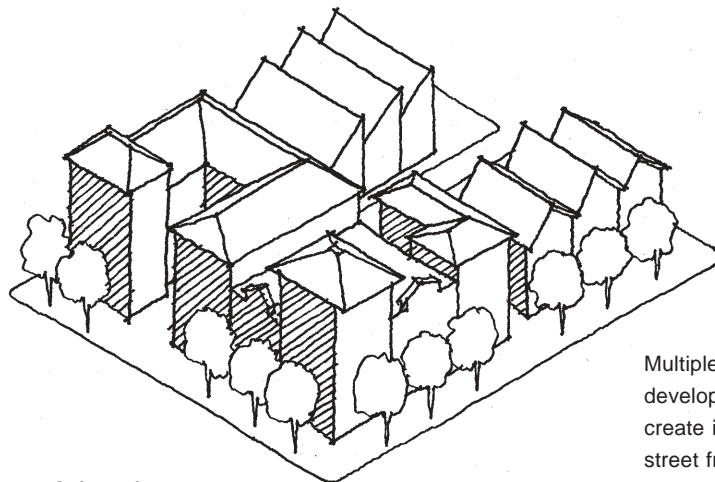
A large site should pay particular attention to massing and scale both in terms of its relationship to the surrounding area and within the site itself. Do not create a large monolithic structure. Ideally, development on a large, super block-scale site should be arranged into multiple buildings that lend a human scale. If this is not feasible, break down the mass of the building, horizontally and vertically, into a hierarchy of volumes. Within each volume the windows, doors and architectural elements should help define the scale of the structure.



design identity  
defined block by  
block



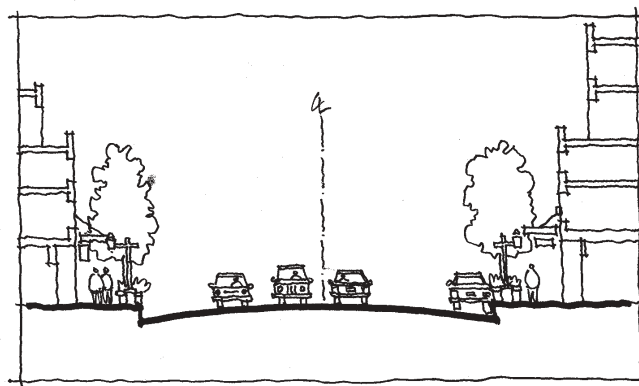
Effect of a large site developed with an unarticulated structure devoid of entrances.



Multiple structures on this large development site are designed to create interest along the entire street frontage and within the interior of the site.

### Upper Stories

Recessing the upper stories of developments on arterials allows sunlight to pass onto the street and minimizes the impact of height on pedestrians.





design identity  
defined block by  
block

## Signs

Design signs that are appropriate for the scale and character desired in the area. Signs should be oriented and scaled for both pedestrians on sidewalks and persons in vehicles on streets within the immediate neighborhood.

### C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency

### C-3 Human Scale

Signs should add interest to the street level environment. They can help unify the overall architectural concept of the building, or provide a unique identity for an individual business within the larger structure. While regulatory sign review is not in the purview of design review, integration with the overall architectural expression of a building and appropriate scale and orientation are important design considerations. Franchises should not be given exceptions to these guidelines.

The following types of signs are encouraged:

- pedestrian-oriented blade signs; and
- signs integrated into the design of the building: along a sign band, on canopies and marquees, located in windows.

These types of signs are discouraged:

- Large illuminated box signs (backlit “can” signs); and
- Post-mounted signs.



*signs that hang underneath awnings and canopies,*



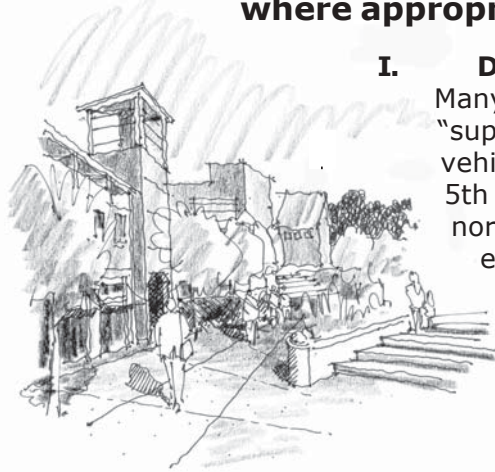
*add interest to the pedestrian environment,*



*and are integrated into the building facade are encouraged.*



**C. Open Spaces and Connections: Improve pedestrian movement throughout the Northgate area by creating quality spaces and pathways through and within development sites connecting to the street system and, where appropriate, public open spaces and parks.**



**I. Development Objective:**

Many streets in the Northgate area are composed of "superblocks" at a scale oriented to the movement of vehicles, rather than pedestrians. For example, 5th Avenue NE is a long, uninterrupted corridor running north-south with very few opportunities for movement east to west. The creation or simulation of an urban street grid through sites is an important design consideration, and creating interior block pedestrian connections through sites and to the surrounding street system (particularly east-west) is a critical element of an improved pedestrian environment.



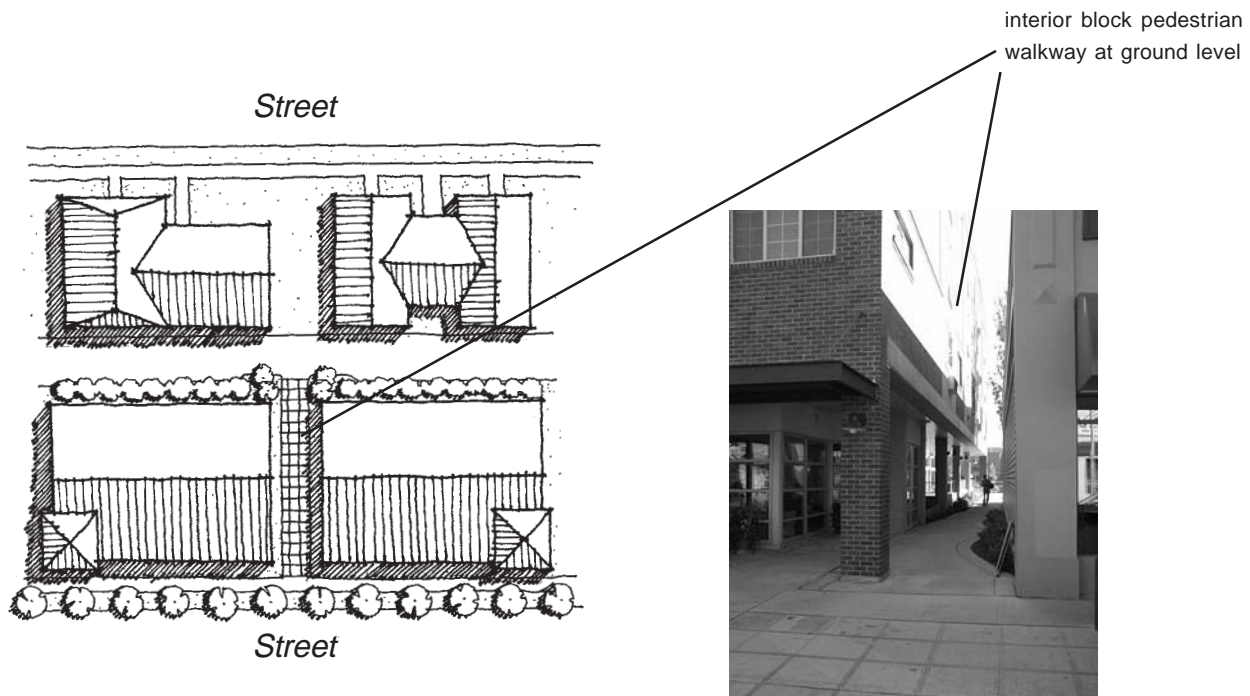
open spaces and connections

**D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances**

**Interior Block Pedestrian Connections**

Larger development sites are encouraged to incorporate pedestrian walkways and open spaces to create breaks in the street wall and encourage movement through the site and to the surrounding area. Such walkways should meet the sidewalk of key pedestrian streets in an engaging and identifiable manner.

In siting such street level pedestrian connections, new developments should analyze the subject site, and their relationship to surrounding properties, streets and activity areas. The transit center is of particular significance regarding pedestrian movement through the area. A new mixed-use transit-oriented development (TOD) planned for the site will make it an important pedestrian destination, and the TOD project and new developments surrounding it are encouraged to promote an environment conducive to walking through such means as interior block pedestrian connections oriented to the surrounding street system.





open spaces and  
connections

## D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances (cont'd)

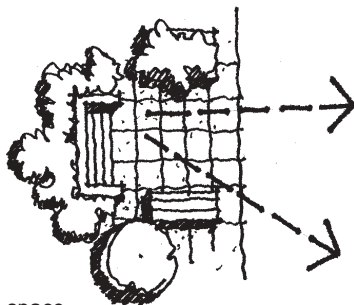
The Northgate Plan places a high priority on open space, especially public spaces that are accessible, comfortable, and in proximity to high activity areas. The Northgate Overlay District includes detailed and specific open space requirements, defining “usable open space” as being open to the public and abutting the sidewalk. The overlay categorizes such spaces by scale and function, ranging from small courtyard spaces to urban plazas and town squares.\* These requirements override city-wide open space development standards for Neighborhood Commercial zones, and the following guidelines augment these requirements for some of the categories by providing additional guidance on scale, character and relationship to the public realm. Open spaces (including parking areas) can help improve site and project sustainability. Refer to the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design\*\* (LEED) manual which provides additional information. Examples include sustainable landscaping and storm water run-off, detention and filtration systems.

### Hierarchy of Open Spaces

#### Urban Garden



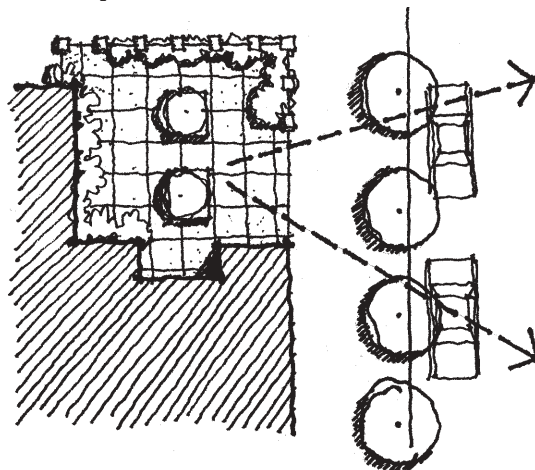
a comfortable, intimate space  
with a visual and physical  
connection to the public realm



#### Guidelines

- New public spaces should provide as many seating opportunities as possible;
- planter walls should be set at a height that allows for their use as seating; and
- moveable chairs and tables are strongly encouraged.

#### Courtyard



Elements such as planters, benches and steps can be sited to break down the scale of an open space, and provide comfortable seating and opportunities for viewing. Courtyards should be integrated with the scale, character and function of the adjoining building.

\* Refer to SMC 23.71.014 for specific Northgate Overlay District open space standards.



## Urban Plazas and Town Squares

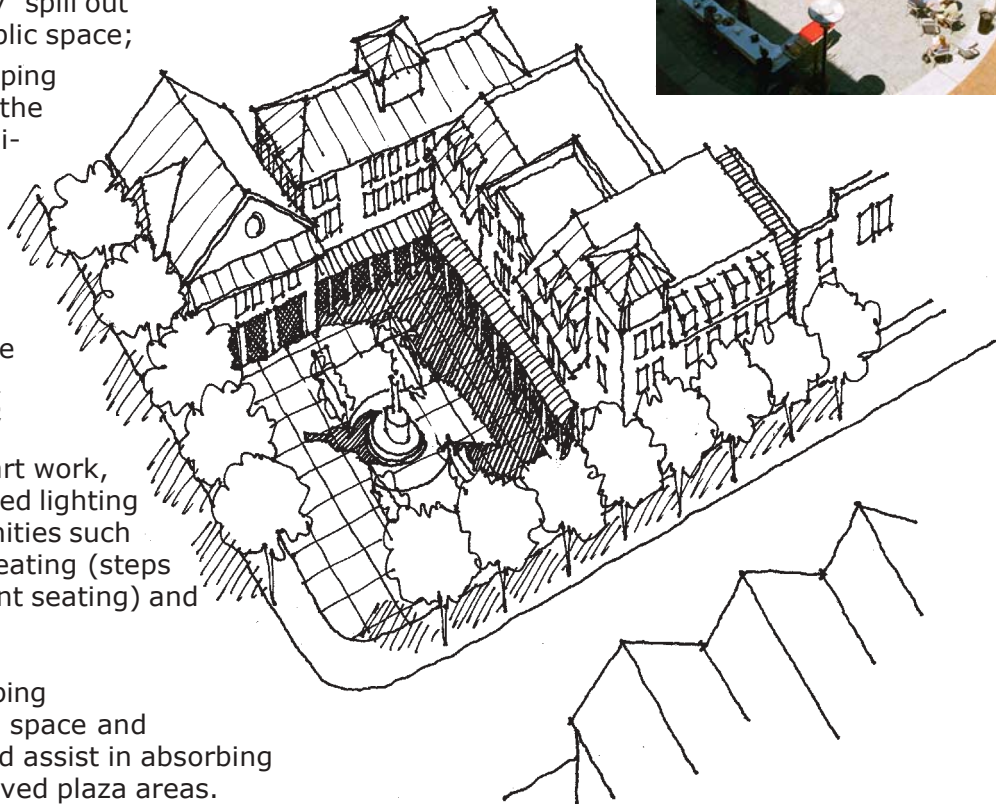
Public space should be enclosed by active buildings around the perimeter to encourage its use and maintain its safety. Plazas and squares should be surrounded by pockets of activity: shops, stands, benches, displays, gardens. These various pockets of activity should all be next to paths and entrances to facilitate constant movement. The ultimate goal should be to gather enough people in and around these spaces so that they will overlap and spill in toward the center of the square.



### Guidelines

The following can help accomplish this goal:

- arrange open space elements in a manner that reduces the scale of the larger plaza into smaller spaces more suitable for pedestrian use.
- design retail spaces that will comfortably “spill out” and enliven public space;
- provide landscaping that enhances the space and architecture;
- provide visual and pedestrian access (including barrier-free access) into the site from the public sidewalk;
- site furniture, art work, pedestrian-scaled lighting and other amenities such as fountains, seating (steps provide excellent seating) and kiosks.
- Design landscaping to enhance the space and architecture and assist in absorbing run-off from paved plaza areas.



\*\*The LEED Green Building Rating System™ is a priority program of the US Green Building Council. It is a voluntary, consensus-based, market-driven building rating system based on existing proven technology. It evaluates environmental performance from a “whole building” perspective over a building’s life cycle, providing a definitive standard for what constitutes a “green building.” Visit [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org) for more information.

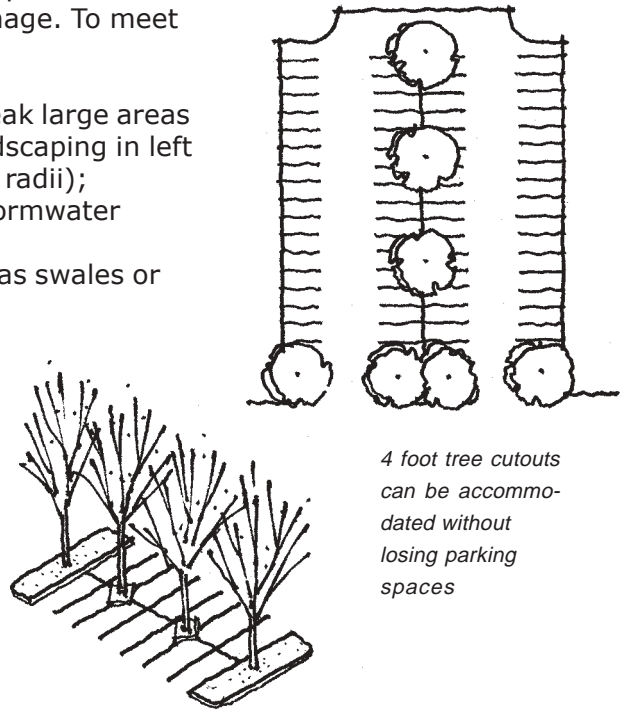


open spaces and connections

## D-4 Design of Parking Lots Near Sidewalks

Interior landscaping, in addition to perimeter landscaping, should be installed to help soften the visual impact of surface parking and enhance natural site drainage. To meet this objective, consider the following:

- Interior landscaping. Use landscaping to break large areas into a series of smaller areas. Plant low landscaping in left over portions of parking areas (e.g., turning radii);
- site landscaping strategically to minimize stormwater run-off;
- innovative drainage control measures such as swales or treatment islands or pervious pavements;
- plant enough trees, which at maturity form a canopy over large portions of the parking area with trees interspersed between parking spaces;
- select tree species that do not obscure signage, amenity features, or opportunities for surveillance;
- plant a mixture of evergreen and deciduous trees for year-round greenery. Select types of trees, such as sapless trees, that do not impact parked cars.

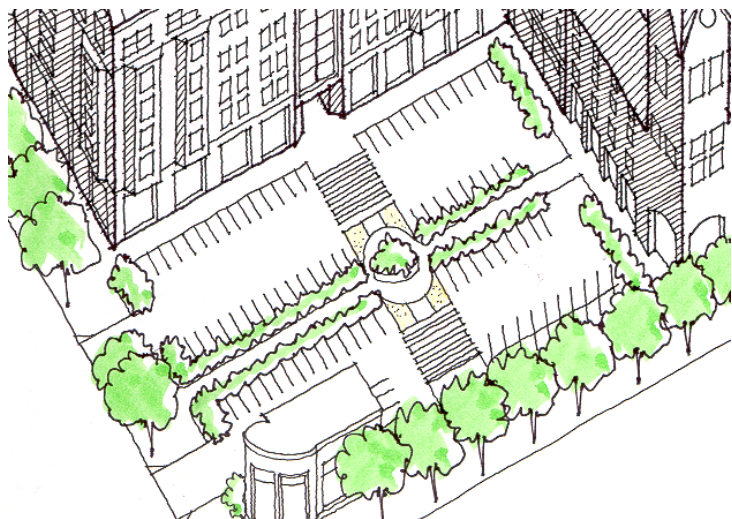


## Large Scale, "Super Block" Development

Surface parking areas should be seen as a resource for the creation of public space. There are many site planning techniques and elements that can help create pedestrian-oriented space.

### Guidelines

The parking area should be laid out as an urban block, at a scale that promotes walking within. A network of clearly defined pedestrian walkways should serve as a "grid", connecting these walkways to uses within the site and to the larger street network in a safe and comfortable manner. The necessary elements--lighting, pavement and plantings--should be placed towards that end. The space should be defined by buildings, and secondary structures such as shelters and small retail spaces (placed at corners) should further define the scale.



## D-4 Design of Parking Lots Near Sidewalks (cont'd)

### Parking Structures

Parking structures are a necessary element of the urban environment. They also merit the same quality materials and finishes as the principal building.

### Guidelines

- Site parking structures away from Major Pedestrian Streets;
- design a well-proportioned and unified parking structure. Consider techniques specified in Citywide Design Guidelines B-1 (Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility), C-2 (Architectural Concept and Consistency), and C-3 (Human Scale) to reduce the perceived scale of the structure and to exhibit a coherent architectural concept;
- consider placing retail at the ground level of a parking structure along the primary facade, where appropriate;
- parking structure facades should be treated with high quality materials and given vertical articulation and emphasis similar to the principal structure. The facade should be designed to visually screen cars;



*example of retail fronting the street with parking set back*

- pedestrian entries should be clearly visible and architecturally expressed on the exterior of the building; and
- off-street bicycle rack parking and storage areas are strongly encouraged on the inside of the structure.



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### **E-1 Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites**

Consistent placement of the same types of street trees creates a unified theme in a pedestrian environment. Consult the City Arborist's recommended list when selecting street tree species.

### **E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site**

Quality landscaping is an essential component of the built urban form. Good use of existing and new landscaping adds considerable value to the design of new development and blends new development with surrounding areas, and reduces stormwater run-off.

#### **Guidelines**

- The corners of street intersections should be distinguished by special landscape treatments: special paving, low planters and flower displays, sculpture, and decorative lighting;
- mark and define pedestrian crossing and walkways with specimen trees and shrubs.



*landscaping helps define and soften pedestrian walkways*



- Ease of maintenance and durability should help guide the selection of plant species and landscape materials such as paving, seating and other site materials. Use native, drought tolerant species of plants and avoid invasive plant species.



### E-3 Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions

The natural area east of 5th Avenue NE from NE 103rd to NE 105th and east of 8th Avenue NE from NE 105th Street to Roosevelt Way NE will be developed as per the Thornton Creek Park 6 Long Range Plan prepared by Seattle Public Utilities and Seattle Parks and Recreation.

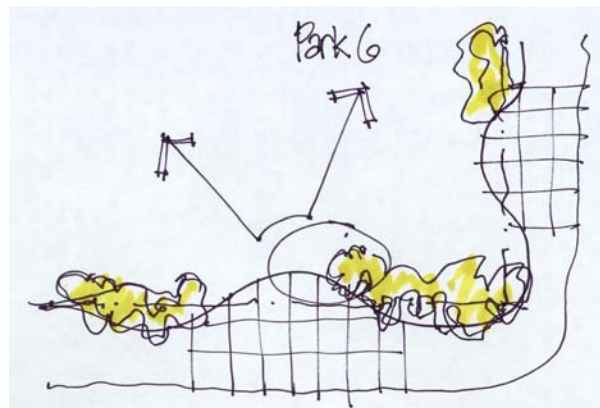


*Thornton Creek natural area*

#### Guidelines

New development adjacent to the natural area should consider:

- retaining natural greenbelt vegetation, where possible;
- incorporating gathering areas and lookout points along the edge of the natural area into the design of the project;
- incorporating native plants into the landscape design to provide the feeling of an extension of the natural area into the project site; and
- providing linkages to the natural area that direct people to designated pathways and away from protected areas



*new development adjacent to Park 6 can take advantage of the natural area as an amenity*

- The plant list developed for the Thornton Creek Park 6 Long Range Plan can help guide the selection of plant species. Native plants provide ease of maintenance and durability, and are usually drought tolerant.



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